



OFFICE OF PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS
IDAHO STATE LEGISLATURE

OPE Update

Mission:
Promote
confidence
and
accountability
in state
government

Message from the Director

A year ago, I said that the Office of Performance Evaluations (OPE) would do its best to maximize both responsiveness to the Legislature and its independence and objectivity in conducting performance evaluations—this has been my mantra from the day I joined the office. Living by this mantra, we listened to the members of the Legislature and worked with staff of Budget and Policy, Legislative Audits, the Office of the Governor, and the Office of the Attorney General.

In our efforts to be responsive, we never forgot that we work under the direction of the bipartisan, Joint

Legislative Oversight Committee (JLOC). The Committee's direction and support for our efforts have been key to our success during this past year. This success is reflected in the 10 reports issued, the \$1.1 million cost savings identified through follow-up work, and the excellent working relationships and credibility this office enjoys within and outside the Legislature.

OPE will continue to focus on meeting legislative needs and doing high quality work. We welcome suggestions that will help us serve the Legislature better.

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National Recognition

In October, the U.S. Comptroller General appointed Rakesh Mohan to the Advisory Council on Government Auditing Standards for a 3-year term. Government auditing standards provide the framework to help ensure auditors conduct their work with competency, integrity, objectivity, and independence.

As part of the 23-member council, Rakesh will provide advice and assistance to the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) in keeping the standards current and making necessary revisions. OPE and Legislative Audits use these standards in their work.

Joint Legislative Oversight Committee (JLOC)

Sen. Shawn Keough, Co-chair
Sen. John Andreason
Sen. Bert Marley
Sen. Marti Calabretta

Rep. Margaret Henbest, Co-chair
Rep. Maxine Bell
Rep. Debbie Field
Rep. Donna Boe

JLOC and OPE Are Making a Difference

Major Functions and Key Performance Measures

FY 2003 Results

1. Conduct independent and objective performance evaluations to assess compliance, efficiency, and effectiveness of state agencies, programs, functions, and activities.
 - (a) Performance evaluation projects completed **5**
 - (b) Follow-up reviews for previous evaluations completed **3**
2. Identify cost savings and opportunities to avoid unnecessary future costs.
 - (a) Estimated cost savings reported..... **\$1.1 million**
3. Provide useful recommendations to assist the legislature in making policy and budget decisions.
 - (a) Bills and resolutions introduced in response to OPE recommendations **1**
4. Be responsive to the legislature's information needs.
 - (a) "24-hour" limited reviews completed **4**
 - (b) Evaluation-related presentations made to the legislature (not including presentations to JLOC) **5**

Measures were revised in FY2003 to accurately reflect the impact of JLOC and OPE efforts.

Projects Completed

During January of the 2004 legislative session, the office released four reports, which are available on the website at www.idaho.gov/ope.

Higher Education Residency Requirements, January 2004

State residency requirements have not been uniformly interpreted or applied among Idaho's four-year education institutions—Boise State University, Idaho State University, Lewis-Clark State College, and the University of Idaho. Although charged with adopting uniform standards for determining residency, the State

Board of Education has given institutions considerable discretion in the way residency requirements are implemented. The report recommends the Legislature clarify residency statutes and asks the board to set uniform standards for residency determinations.

Fiscal Accountability of Pupil Transportation, January 2004

Idaho reimburses school districts for 85 percent of allowable costs of pupil transportation. These costs have increased at nearly twice the rate of inflation during the past ten years. Report recommendations call for clarification and improvement of the Department of Education's oversight of pupil transportation.

The department's transportation staff conduct in-depth program and fiscal reviews of only 2 or 3 districts each year. At the current rate, it would take 40 years for a district to be reviewed twice. The report recommends the *Board* of Education clarify the desired level of fiscal

oversight the *Department* of Education should provide. Other recommendations call for better district analysis of costs and bus occupancy, improved methods for counting students who ride buses, and development of best practices.

As part of this evaluation, we developed a computerized model of the new pupil transportation funding cap. This model can be used as a tool by the Department of Education and school districts to understand how the cap will affect district funding.

OPE staff visited 14 school districts during the evaluation.

Recommendations, if implemented, will improve fiscal accountability of public education.

School District Administration and Oversight, January 2004

Staff responsible for administering Idaho's school districts grew nearly nine percent over the past five years—twice the rate of teachers. State Department of Education publications that provide information about district staffing and expenditures do not contain comparative and trend information that lawmakers and the public need to understand district staffing decisions and their use of public funds. We also identify

opportunities that may reduce purchasing and health benefit costs.

The report provides a detailed, statewide review of administration and an assessment of state oversight based on the results of visits to 11 districts. There are recommendations to address evaluation findings in the areas of oversight and fiscal accountability, staffing and salaries, purchasing and contracting, and health insurance benefits.

Both reports on public education identify areas where savings could be achieved.

Management of State Agency Passenger Vehicles, Follow-up Review, January 2004

The review looks at the progress of the 20 agencies with the largest fleets and how they have implemented five recommendations specifically related to agency management of vehicle use. Overall, agencies continue to make progress, but the progress is slow.

The Division of Financial

Management indicated the fiscal year 2005 budget is almost totally devoid of replacement capital outlay for vehicles. As agencies request transfers for capital outlay needs from other areas of the budget, DFM reports it will ensure agencies have actively complied with recommendations for vehicle plans.

Staff

- Director:
Rakesh Mohan
- Adm. Assistant:
Margaret Campbell
- Evaluators:
A.J. Burns
Paul Headlee
Jim Henderson
Ned Parrish
Chris Shoop
Brook Smith
- Intern:
Breanne Kunz

Projects in Progress . . .

Staff are following up on agency efforts to address OPE recommendations from three of our previous studies. Follow-up reports scheduled for release in March relate

to:

- Idaho's Medicaid Program
- Idaho Child Care Program
- Public works contractor licensing

About OPE Staff

New Staff

We have two new staff at OPE. Brook Smith, Performance Evaluator, has a bachelor's degree in Political Science and a Master of Public Administration degree from Boise State University.

Breanne Kunz, Intern, is pursuing a degree in Psychology at Boise State University and plans to study human factors engineering (human-computer interaction) in graduate school.

Internship Program Through Boise State University

The Office of Performance Evaluations is working with the Psychology and Public Affairs Departments at Boise State

University to offer internship opportunities to students looking for experience in performance evaluation and policy analysis.

Support for Accountability

Family and friends of OPE staff have attended recent JLOC meetings to show support for the accountability work conducted by our office. We appreciate their interest, support, and confidence in our work.

Professional Involvement

Margaret Campbell published an article, "The Touch of the Magic Wand," in the Fall 2003 issue of *NLPES News* (a newsletter of the National Legislative Program Evaluation Society). The article is available at www.ncsl.org/programs/nlpes/.

Rakesh Mohan organized and moderated a plenary session on the effective use of evaluation and auditing standards at the NLPES Fall Conference in East Lansing, Michigan. He also organized and moderated two panels on the following topics at the annual conference of the American Evaluation Association in Reno last November:

- Staff independence and responsiveness to the legislature
- Opportunities and challenges in the use of performance measurements

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